

# The Yardstick

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*BWMA gratefully records the Patronage of the late Lord Shore and the Honorary Membership of the late John Aspinall, Nirad C Chaudhuri CBE, Jennifer Paterson, CBE, Leo McKern AO, Norris McWhirter CBE, Fred Dibnah MBE, Sir Julian Hodge, KStG, KStJ, Bernard Levin, CBE, Dr Charles H Sisson, CH, DLitt, Fritz Spiegl, David Shepherd, MBE*

## Countdown to 2010

Transatlantic opposition is growing rapidly against the European Commission's intention to outlaw non-metric expression from 1st January 2010. American manufacturing industry weighed in during January, and the European electrical and metal industry followed in March. Several British industries have declared their opposition and others are expected soon.

The Department of Trade and Industry stated in May: "*The EC will be reviewing the working of the Metrication Directives and, specifically, the question of supplementary indications. We expect they will make appropriate proposals within the next twelve months or so. The Government will, of course, consult widely on whatever changes may be proposed*".

We are bemused, but not particularly surprised, at the DTI's intention to conduct its consultation *after* the EC's proposals have been made, rather than be active in shaping them.

BWMA wrote to the Consumers Association in February for their views but has heard nothing back. Members are encouraged to write to the CA (as private individuals) to urge that they support consumers' right to information in terms other than metric. Their address is 2 Marylebone Road, London NW1 4DF.

## "We do not have constitutional Acts"

So announced Judge Tomlin in the first small claims court hearing held to test the existence of constitutional Acts, as expounded by Lord Justice Laws in February 2002. What Lord Justice Laws *really* meant, says Judge Tomlin, is that we have "Acts with constitutional implications".

If we have no constitutional Acts, then the legal basis for Steven Thoburn's conviction for using pounds and ounces melts away, for without its special status as a constitutional Act, the European Communities Act 1972 cannot overturn the later Weights and Measures Act 1985 that authorises pounds and ounces and other imperial units.

John Gardner, Director

BWMA is a non-profit body that exists to promote parity in law between British and metric units. It enjoys support from across Britain's political spectrum, from all manner of businesses and the general public. BWMA is financed by member subscriptions and donations. Membership is £12 per year. Cheques or postal orders payable to "BWMA", 11 Greensleeves Avenue, Broadstone, Dorset BH18 8BJ

# Report of US Meeting with EU Representatives Brussels, Belgium

2 March, 2005

Last year, U.S. government officials visited Brussels to put questions to EC officials about the 2010 ban on non-metric supplementary indications. We reproduce some of the responses below, and a complete account of the meeting can be accessed on the internet at this location:

<http://ts.nist.gov/ts/htdocs/200/202/EUDirective.htm>

**US Delegation:** How will the EU Metric Directive be implemented and enforced at the country level? Will all EU Member States begin enforcing metric only provisions on January 1, 2010, or will the individual countries begin adopting legislation to implement the EU Directive after the 2010 deadline? Would individual country legislation come into effect later than 2010?

**EC Officials:** *The Member States will perform the enforcement. The legislation is in place for the Directive to take effect at the time the deadline expires.*

Is soft conversion of non-SI units to SI units acceptable?

*Yes, soft conversion is allowed. Piping, conduit, fixtures, and supplies needed to maintain "existing" (pre-1980) construction and equipment will continue to be permitted. Hardware and electrical components must fit together. However, the EU is metric and new products must be expressed in metric units.*

We assume that the Directive applies to product, package and shipping container labeling. Are these the only requirements for "visible" labels? Are metric labels required on components or just the finished product (e.g., electrical components such as breakers, switches, and wire)? Will there be any exceptions?

*All quantities are required to be in metric wherever a quantity is used. The Directive is not only for consumer products and trade, but also for all uses of any product or material.*

What type of information does the Directive require to be only in metric units (i.e., dimensions, power ratings, temperature ratings, etc.)?

*All quantities are required to be in metric wherever a quantity is used. The Directive is not only for consumer products and trade, but also for all uses of any product or material.*

How will metric labelling requirements impact replacement parts, infrastructure components, etc?

*The use of inch-pound units is permitted on replacement parts for equipment on the market in 1980 or before.*

Are metric labels required if the component is NOT sold on the open market i.e., if a company ships a component from a location in the U.S. to another of its own plants in the EU is the company required to use only SI units in its internal processes?

*They [the EC] want company-to-company information to be based on metric units, because the workers are knowledgeable in metric units and may not understand inch-pound units. However, enforcement is at the Member State level so the nature of enforcement at the company-to-company level cannot be predicted. The EU wants to avoid doing things that will make their businesses less competitive.*

How will safety concerns be addressed? Under circumstances where metric only labeling could create a safety, incompatibility, or liability risk, would exceptions be considered? If yes, how would they be requested and granted? For example would the EU accept petitions for exemptions or would they have to be pursued at the Member State level?

*Enforcement will be done at the Member State level and this is an enforcement issue. If issues are raised, the Commission may consider providing guidance. They are reluctant to answer "what if" questions because they don't know if a question is hypothetical or real, what is the magnitude of the issue, and how will it impact their industry.*

How will the EU communicate about the Directive in the years leading up to January 1, 2010?

*They were not planning to issue any guidance document, but they are now considering it as a result of our meeting.*

How will the EU or Member States police and enforce adherence to the Directive?

*This is up to the Member States to decide. Discussions must be directed to the Member States.*

Does the requirement for SI-only units extend to sales catalogs, blueprints, e-commerce and internet sites, advertisements, brochures and user manuals and instructions?

*The Directive applies to all catalogs, blueprints, e-commerce and Internet sites, advertisements, brochures and user manuals and instructions that target only the EU. If they are clearly in-*

*tended for the international market (i.e., including non-metric countries), then inch-pound units will be accepted in the text of the language for the non-metric countries.*

Do the requirements for SI-only units apply to magazines and books?

Yes.

Do the requirements apply to internal business operations, processes, formulations, etc.?

Yes.

Will the SI-only requirements apply to freight and shipping transactions?

Yes, unless they are exempt under treaties.

**BWMA comment:** the intolerance typified by the above responses has often prompted comparisons with George Orwell's *1984* and the scene where the lead character Winston asks for a pint and is told that only litres and half-litres are served. Here is another, equally potent extract:

Nineteen Eighty-Four,  
George Orwell

Syme: 'It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words. Of course the great wastage is in the verbs and adjectives, but there are hundreds of nouns that can be got rid of as well. It isn't only the synonyms; there are also the antonyms. After all, what justification is there for a word which is simply the opposite of some other word? A word contains its opposite in itself. Take "good", for instance. If you have a word like "good", what need is there for a word like "bad"? "Ungood" will do just as well--better, because it's an exact opposite, which the other is not. Or again, if you want a stronger version of "good", what sense is there in having a whole string of vague useless words like "excellent" and "splendid" and all the rest of them? "Plusgood" covers the meaning, or "doubleplusgood" if you want something stronger still. Of course we use those forms already, but in the final version of Newspeak there'll be nothing else. In the end the whole notion of goodness and badness will be covered by only six words — in reality, only one word. Don't you see the beauty of that, Winston? It was B.B.'s idea originally, of course,' he added as an afterthought. A sort of vapid eagerness flitted across Winston's face at the mention of Big Brother. Nevertheless

Syme immediately detected a certain lack of enthusiasm.

'You haven't a real appreciation of Newspeak, Winston,' he said almost sadly. 'Even when you write it you're still thinking in Oldspeak. I've read some of those pieces that you write in "The Times" occasionally. They're good enough, but they're translations. In your heart you'd prefer to stick to Oldspeak, with all its vagueness and its useless shades of meaning. You don't grasp the beauty of the destruction of words. Do you know that Newspeak is the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year?'

Winston did know that, of course. He smiled, sympathetically he hoped, not trusting himself to speak. Syme bit off another fragment of the dark-coloured bread, chewed it briefly, and went on:

'Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed, will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten. Already, in the Eleventh Edition, we're not far from that point. But the process will still be continuing long after you and I are dead. Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. Even now, of course, there's no reason or excuse for committing thoughtcrime. It's merely a question of self-discipline, reality-control. But in the end there won't be any need even for that. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak,' he added with a sort of mystical satisfaction.

'Has it ever occurred to you, Winston, that by the year 2050, at the very latest, not a single human being will be alive who could understand such a conversation as we are having now?'

Doubleplusgood Plusgood <b>Good</b> Ungood PlusUngood DoubleplusUngood	Centimetre Decimetre <b>Metre</b> Dekametre Hectometre Kilometre
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## LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER

On 16 April 2006, BWMA's Patrons and Hon Members sent an open letter to Tony Blair, published in *The Times* on 21 April 2006:

Dear Prime Minister,

As Patrons and Honorary Members of the British Weights and Measures Association, we were very pleased to hear of the emphatic assurances given by the Secretary of State for Transport, Alistair Darling, during BBC's 'Question Time' on 23 February, that there is no intention to replace miles by kilometres or mph by km/h on road signs; and even happier to read the statement by Gunter Verheugen, European Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry, that "I am not pressuring the UK to go metric. As long as I am in office we will not touch the issue. Full stop. I personally have a lot of sympathy for the pint and the mile in the UK. Really, what is the problem?"

We were also impressed, though not surprised, to learn the results of recent opinion polls by the media. We understand that 'Good Morning' (ITV) reported that 97% of viewers opposed metric conversion, ITV Teletext 96% against, while Sky TV simply announced "overwhelming" opposition. The AOL News website poll, that ran 22-24 February, attracted 30,000 votes (a definitive sample!) of whom 82.5% preferred to keep the mile. Likewise, the BBCi website's 'Have Your Say' poll (22-26 February) attracted 2,490 'recommendations', of which 85.9% favoured pro-mile comments. Furthermore, consumer surveys by professional market researchers have invariably produced similar results. The will of the people is surely conclusive on this whole issue.

Accordingly, we trust that, while safeguarding the pint and the mile, you will also ensure a future for the pound and ounce. The EU may, as it has done since 1995, prohibit use of customary units of weight except as 'supplementary indications' - i.e. alongside but subordinate to the primary metric marking - yet even that inferior use, solely to provide additional information for the customer's benefit, is to be abolished from 1 January 2010.

So it is not enough that all goods must be weighed and priced in metric measures; in less than 4 years from now it will be a criminal offence even to mention imperial measures! This is repression purely for its own sake. It is no more than a malicious attack on our cultural heritage as well as on our democracy.

Not only do the vast majority of the people not want a metric monopoly, a large proportion do not even understand metric units and - if that proposed regulation is enforced - will be deprived of the necessary consumer protection afforded by display of imperial equivalents. Will you therefore please undertake to secure a permanent derogation for use of supplementary indications?

Yours faithfully,

TREVOR BAILEY  
CHRISTOPHER BOOKER  
JILLY COOPER  
ROY FAIERS  
SIR RANULPH FIENNES  
SANDY GALL  
CANDIDA LYCETT GREEN  
JOOLS HOLLAND  
Prof. RICHARD HOLMES  
Vice Admiral SIR LOUIS LE BAILLY  
Dr JAMES LE FANU  
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SIR TIM RICE  
ALEXANDER McCALL SMITH  
ANDREW ROBERTS  
QUINLAN TERRY  
SIR ROWLAND WHITEHEAD Bt  
ANTONY WORRALL THOMPSON

NB. IAN BOTHAM, PETER HITCHENS AND EDWARD FOX ALSO SIGNED BUT TOO LATE FOR PUBLICATION

**The Prime Minister's Direct Communications Unit replied on 4 May:** "The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you and your members for your recent letters. Mr Blair would like to reply personally, but as you will appreciate he receives many thousands of letters each week and this is not possible. The matter you raise is the responsibility of the Department of Trade and Industry, therefore he has asked that your letter be forwarded to that Department so that they are also aware of your views".

## *Steve Thoburn ruling - Small Claims Court*

On 10 March 2006, our friend Kevin Gordon made a claim against Mole Valley Council for a parking fine imposed under the civil parking enforcement system, meaning the fine was applied without a conviction by a court of law. Mr Gordon argued that the fine was unlawful because the Bill of Rights 1689 forbade all fines and forfeits before conviction. Mr Gordon said that, since Lord Justice Laws had declared BoR 1689 a constitutional Act, it was protected from implied repeal by the Road Traffic Act 1991 which otherwise sought to remove courts from the fining process.

Deputy District Judge Tomlin rejected Mr Gordon's case by saying: **"We do not have constitutional Acts, only Acts with constitutional implications"**.

Mr Gordon said that fines before conviction by a court was an infringement of his constitutional rights. Judge Tomlin replied, **"I am not sure about constitutional rights. There are great difficulties with this; it is not a concept that fits in easily with our law"**.

Judge Tomlin was handed a copy of paragraphs 62 and 63 of the Laws judgement which described the existence of constitutional Acts. Judge Tomlin said: **"I acknowledge that this appears to refer to constitutional Acts; however, this in fact refers to Acts with constitutional implications"**.

Judge Tomlin went on to say that there was only one Act that could be regarded as constitutional; this was the Human Rights Act. He said that the Human Rights Act was the only Act that could affect the efficacy of an Act of Parliament. Higher courts could consider Acts of Parliament under the Human Rights Act and issue a non-compliance notice (but they could not rule an Act illegal). Judge Tomlin duly ruled against Mr Gordon and allowed Mole Valley Council to keep the fine.

So that readers may decide for themselves the accuracy of Judge Tomlin's description of the Laws ruling, here is the relevant extract:

**"62 ... the common law has come to recognise that there exist rights which should properly be classified as constitutional or fundamental ... And from this a further insight follows. We should recognise a hierarchy of Acts of Parliament: as it were "ordinary" statutes and "constitutional" statutes. The two categories must be distinguished on a principled basis. In my opinion a constitutional statute is one which (a) conditions the legal relationship between citizen and State in some general, overarching manner, or (b) enlarges or diminishes the scope of what we would now regard as fundamental constitutional rights ... The special status of constitutional statutes follows the special status of constitutional rights. Examples are the Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights 1689, the Act of Union, the Reform Acts ...**

**"63 Ordinary statutes may be impliedly repealed. Constitutional statutes may not.** For the repeal of a constitutional Act or the abrogation of a fundamental right to be effected by statute, the court would apply this test: is it shown that the legislature's actual - not imputed, constructive or presumed - intention was to effect the repeal or abrogation? I think the test could only be met by express words in the later statute, or by words so specific that the inference of an actual determination to effect the result contended for was irresistible. **The ordinary rule of implied repeal does not satisfy this test. Accordingly, it has no application to constitutional statutes ...** A constitutional statute can only be repealed, or amended in a way which significantly affects its provisions touching fundamental rights or otherwise the relation between citizen and State, by unambiguous words on the face of the later statute".

Our President Vivian Linacre remarks: *"To attempt to draw a distinction between 'Constitutional Acts' and 'Acts with constitutional implications' is (a) absurd and (b) illiterate, since (a) almost every Act has some constitutional implications, however remote - therefore they cannot constitute a distinct category - and (b) a 'Constitutional Act' is an absolute whereas 'Acts with constitutional implications' is relative - merely a matter of degree - therefore they cannot be compared. Conclusion: the term 'Acts with constitutional implications' is meaningless and a perverse distraction"*.

**BWMA comment:** To all intents and purposes, Judge Tomlin has annulled the Divisional Court ruling, at least in so far as it applies to the government's ability to levy fines. Obviously, a small claims judge cannot do this so, rather than disputing Lord Justice Laws' ruling, Judge Tomlin has misrepresented its words and meaning. Just as Lord Justice Laws invented the concept of "Constitutional Acts" so Deputy District Judge Tomlin has invented the concept of "Acts with constitutional implications". Laws was driven by a desperate need to evade the fundamental issue of implied repeal - i.e. that no Act of Parliament can bind its successors - so that the European Communities Act of 1972 cannot override the Weights and Measures Act 1985 which accords imperial and metric measures equal status. Tomlin was driven by an equally desperate need to evade the fundamental issue that, if Laws was right, then the 1689 Bill of Rights overrides the Road Traffic Act and consequently these fines are unlawful; whereas if such fines are lawful then Laws was wrong and so are all prosecutions for use of imperial weights and measures.

**From the Archive: the BWMA Annual Report of 1906 presents the view of Mr MacFarland, Vice-President of the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company, Pittsburg, USA**

Manufacturers do not object to anybody using the metric system who may find it more convenient. Perhaps chemists do. We do object most strongly, however, to having chemists, astronomers, and others, who know absolutely nothing of the details of manufacturing, try to dictate to us how to run our business. We believe also that under the simplest rules of evidence, they should not be allowed to express opinions about our line of work. Their earned reputation in other lines has a tendency to give weight to their erroneous opinions unless contradicted. The printed testimony shows that manufacturers have told what they know, while the scientists have been allowed to tell what they think, which, as affecting lines other than their own, has generally been entirely wrong.

The claim is made that we now have a great confusion of units and ratios, all of which will be removed by adopting the metric system. To this the answer can be made, with absolute certainty, that such will not be the case. We shall simply add the metric units to the others. This has been the history of France and Germany. This talk about confusion really comes from a confusion of ideas, and a lack of understanding

of the object of varying units. The fact is that each trade or business uses the unit which is most convenient to it. Manufacturers of machinery have really only one unit - the inch. Everything else comes from it. Builders use the foot and inch. Others find the mile a convenient unit. Astronomers find for some purposes that a "light-year" is a useful unit. We have no objection. There is no reason why the factories which make cloth should use the same unit as those which make machines.

For about forty years, it has been legal in America for anyone who so desires to use the metric system. Why has it made so little progress, if it has such advantages as its friends claim? Manufacturers have shown again and again that they are ready to abandon old methods and adopt new ones, even at great expense, when there is some benefit in doing so. A vast number of the responsible men in our great factories are technically educated men, who have used the metric system at college, and have had a chance to test it. If it had any real advantage, they could, through the great engineering societies, easily agree upon its adoption. This Bill is an attempt of pure scientists, to whom the matter is not vital, to force upon people to whom it is vital a system which, after thorough investigation, they do not want, and which would cause them annoyance, expense and inefficiency in their business.

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## **MEGALITHIC MEASURES & RHYTHMS by Vivian Linacre**

"MEGALITHIC MEASURES & RHYTHMS", edited by our President, Vivian Linacre, and a Research Fellow in geology at St Andrews University, Richard Batchelor, has just been published by Floris Books of Edinburgh (ISBN 10 0-86315-554-5) at £20 hardback. A beautifully produced volume of 254 pages, lavishly illustrated, it is the result of over seven years' work following the death in 1998 of their friend Anne Macaulay, a mathematical and musicological genius, who entrusted her notes and diagrams to them.

Elaborating on her analysis of precise engineering surveys of nearly two hundred of the surviving huge stone circles constructed between 6,500 and 3,500 years ago on the NW Atlantic seaboard from Shetland to Brittany - mankind's earliest large-scale structures anywhere - they provide detailed proof that the builders possessed very advanced skills in geometry and were familiar with use of square roots, the Fibonacci series of numbers and the golden mean. In effect, they invented mathematics! Moreover, contrary to the universal presumption that all scientific knowledge originated in ancient Babylon, Egypt and Greece and only later spread to the barbarous fringes of Europe, in fact this same 'Pythagorean' mathematics migrated to the Eastern Mediterranean from our wild shores.

**Further information available from Vivian, e-mail: [vtlinacre AT yahoo DOT co DOT uk](mailto:vtlinacre AT yahoo DOT co DOT uk) or write to: 21 Marshall Place, Perth PH2 8AG**

## **BWMA CONSTITUTION (adopted at AGM, 6 May 2006)**

- 1) NAME: The name of the Association is British Weights and Measures Association (hereinafter called "the Association").
- 2) OBJECT: The Association is a non-profit body that exists to promote parity in law between British and metric units, and to promote the use of British units where appropriate. It will do all such lawful things as are necessary for the attainment of the said object.
- 3) MEMBERSHIP
  - i) Ordinary membership shall be open to all who support the object of BWMA. Application for ordinary membership shall be made giving information as the Committee requires, and sent to the Honorary Treasurer with the annual subscription.
  - ii) Patrons and Honorary members may be appointed at the discretion of the Committee. Patrons and Honorary members shall not be entitled to vote.
  - iii) If, in the opinion of the Committee, a member shall have been guilty of conduct detrimental to the Association it shall have power to expel the member from membership. Such person shall have the right of appeal at Annual and Special General Meetings (hereinafter "General Meetings").
  - iv) Any prospective member whose application is declined may exercise the right to be heard by the Committee before a final decision is made.
  - v) Any member may resign from the Association by giving notice in writing to the Honorary Treasurer. A resigned or expelled member shall have no right to the return of his or her subscription or any unexpired portion of it.
- 4) SUBSCRIPTION
  - vi) The annual subscription shall be as approved at an Annual General Meeting. Any member whose subscription remains more than six months in arrear shall be liable to removal from membership of the Association.
- 5) FINANCE
  - vii) The funds of the Association shall be devoted to the purposes and interests of the Association. Monies which in the opinion of the Committee are not immediately required may be invested in a bank or building society.
  - viii) Donations may be made to related causes approved by the Committee.
  - ix) All expenditure shall be approved by the Committee prior to commitment, other than administrative expenses.
  - x) Cheques for payment shall bear any two signatures of the following: Chairman, Director, Honorary Treasurer.
  - xi) The accounts of the Association shall be audited by an Honorary Auditor appointed by the Committee.
  - xii) Accounts shall be open to inspection by members.
- 6) COMMITTEE
  - i) The affairs of the Association shall be controlled by a Committee.
  - ii) The Committee shall normally meet three to four times a year, but may hold fewer or more meetings as required.
  - iii) The Chairman shall have an additional vote in the event of an equality of votes.
  - iv) Committee minutes shall be distributed to Committee members prior to meetings, together with an agenda, not less than seven days prior to the meeting.
  - v) The Committee shall have power to appoint a member to the Committee, with the power to vote, until the date of the next AGM, where he or she shall be eligible for election.
  - vi) The Committee may, at its discretion, co-opt any member on to the Committee for specific purpose and for a specific period and this member can take part in discussion, but will not have the right to vote.
  - vii) Any member of the Committee who fails to attend three successive meetings unless excused by the Committee is liable to forfeit his or her office.
  - viii) A financial report shall be submitted at each Committee meeting.
  - ix) A quorum shall be five, two of whom must be Honorary Officers. In the event of there being no quorum, a meeting may still be held and any decisions taken shall be subject to ratification at the next meeting.
  - x) Honorary Officers shall be Chairman, Director and Honorary Treasurer and such other Honorary Officers as the Committee shall decide. The Chairman shall preside at all meetings (Committee and General); in his or her absence, a member shall be chosen as acting chairman from those present.
  - xi) The Committee may invite a suitable person to fill the office of President, subject to appointment at an AGM. A President so appointed shall be an *ex-officio* member of the Committee and carry no right to vote.
- 7) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS (AGMs)
  - i) Notice of at least 42 days shall be given, in writing, of AGMs.
  - ii) Nominations of members eligible to serve as Officers or Committee members shall be made in writing to the Honorary Treasurer not less than 28 days before the date of the AGM. The names of those nominated and offering themselves for election shall be circulated, along with a notice convening the AGM, not less than 21 days before the AGM.
  - iii) Honorary Officers and Committee members shall stand down at AGMs, and elections shall take place. Only fully paid-up members shall be entitled to vote, or be eligible for election to Committee.
  - iv) The Director and Treasurer shall present reports at the AGM.
  - v) Any other business proper for an AGM shall also be conducted.
  - vi) Decisions shall be by simple majority vote of those present (subject to 9 below), with the Chairman having a casting vote.
- 8) SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS (SGMs)
  - i) SGMs must be called within 28 days – and held within 56 days - upon receipt of a requisition handed to the Chairman signed by at least twelve fully paid-up members, or authority given by the Committee, giving members not less than 14 days notice of the date. Notice convening the meeting must state the business to be discussed and the meeting shall transact no other business than that notified.
  - ii) Decisions shall be by simple majority vote, with the Chairman having a casting vote.
  - iii) Votes by proxy shall be accepted at SGMs, so long as accompanied by signed authority of the absent member
- 9) AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution may be altered by a resolution passed at a General Meeting, provided that the notice of the General Meeting included notice of the resolution, setting out the terms of the alteration proposed. Votes by post and proxy shall be accepted.
- 10) DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION

A General Meeting of the Association may dissolve the Association, provided that notice of the General Meeting included notice of the resolution. Any residue funds, after settlement of liabilities, shall be disposed of in accordance with the wishes of the majority of fully paid-up members present at the General Meeting.

# Imperial Measures Endure

Bruce Moon, 1 February 2006

*Bruce Moon of Diamond Harbour, New Zealand, visited India for four months in 2005. He found that the use of imperial measures was just as widespread as before.*

Perhaps as much as anything, the inherent superiority of imperial measures is shown by their continued extensive use in India. In their efforts to throw off all imperial trappings following independence in 1947, the Government of India quickly adopted officially the metric system of weights and measures. Nearly sixty years later, one would hardly know this at times in its cities and villages. Of course, India's people do not suffer under draconian laws which punish them heavily if they sell a pound of bananas. If such laws did exist, then the average Indian, an anarchist at heart, would simply ignore them.

It does seem that generally the kilogram has replaced the pound. The Indian barrow boy has a set of (supposedly) kilogram-based weights which he puts in one pan of his scales to weigh his fruit when he sells it. The story is different for measures based on feet and inches. There is a "twelve-foot-high" wall around the prison lockup in Delhi, said the *Times of India* on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2005. Heights above sea level on mountain roads are typically given in feet and pointed out as such by taxi drivers – 6000 feet on the way to Mussoorie and at Happy Valley Tea Estate in Darjeeling, 6800 feet at Six Mile Bazaar nearby and 8950 feet on the road to Leh in Ladakh. There is a Police station at the Nine Mile and a village at the Ten. The billboard at Tsomgo Lake in Sikkim says it is at 12,400 feet. Some other billboards talk in miles.

The thickness of layers of maturing tea at Happy Valley are stated in inches and the temperature in degrees Fahrenheit. My tailor has a classical one-inch measuring tape around his neck with not a centimetre in sight. The Tibetan carpet catalogue from Rajpur gives sizes in feet and inches and defines quality in "knots per square inch". An "undertrial", i.e. accused, is described as being 5 feet 10 inches in a police report.

Agents describe land for sale in imperial units – four and a half acres on a billboard in one new residential colony, a 100,000 square yard site at Amritsar available at 78,000 rupees per square yard. Many 'acres' were confiscated from the former princely Pataudi family (remember the cricketer?). Irrigation water quantities are spelt out in cusecs and acre-feet. Sometimes ancient local measures creep in. The *Times of India* of 4 August 2005 reports amounts of land under cultivation in hashish and opium in "bighas" and acres. The greatest depth of the famed Dal Lake in Kashmir is 15 feet, in the waterways around it seven to eight feet.

Use of Fahrenheit clinical thermometers is widespread and there is medical laboratory equipment calibrated in foot-pound units with patient data expressed likewise. Newspaper readers do not suffer at the hands of metric wordsmiths who obediently convert all foot-pound units in original reports into metrics. In an American report of a comet strike, all values were given in foot-pound units. A bomb was reckoned to contain "less than ten pounds of plastic explosive". Some airline tickets express luggage limits in pounds and inches. Anybody can draw conclusions from these examples – metric units? No thanks, I'll stick with what I've got!

## Road sign success

Our colleague Giles Pepperell received the following letter from John Conley of Highways Management at Westminster City Council, dated 8 February 2006: "Thank you for pointing out the faulty width restriction signs for Ebury Bridge. We have not been able to find out how these signs were fitted with metric measure only but we will be changing the signs for those with imperial measurements only".

(Please note our address replaces the PO Box)

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